

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Sunday Within the Octave of Christmas.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Brethren, these two little words of St. Paul in the epistle to day contain excellent advice, especially to-day, on the eve of the new year. How much we are hindered, how many families it would save from ruin, how many souls it would save from hell, could they be made a common watchword in any large city in this country during the year 1893!

But do you wish me to tell you the easiest way to be sober? It is to take the total abstinence pledge. What does a man do when he takes the pledge? Just what the farmer does who, seeing that his fence is about high enough to keep the cattle out of the grain, makes it just one rail higher; for he knows that there may be one beast wilder than the rest who will leap over an ordinary fence. So a prudent man, seeing the ravages of the vice of intemperance among his friends, dreads some taint of it hidden in his own nature; dreads some movement of weakness during the passing of the convivial glass, or during some depression of spirits or foolish mirth. So he puts all danger out of the question by the pledge. For if there be danger from an inherited appetite or from a convivial disposition, or from prosperity or adversity, there is no mistake about this: the man who does not drink a single drop cannot drink too much.

But again: what does a man do who takes the pledge? Just what the kind mother does who wants to induce her sick child to take the bitter medicine—she tastes it herself. The pledge is taken by a man who may not need it for his own sake, but who loves another who does need it. It is taken in order to give good example. It is not only a preventive for one's self, but for those who may be led by our influence. It is one great means that fathers and mothers use in order to save their children from the demon of drunkenness. Oh! how pleasing to God are those parents who practise total abstinence by way of good example! Oh! how blessed is the home from which intoxicating drink has been utterly banished! How wise are those parents who thus teach their children that intoxicating drink, though it may be used with innocence, must always be used with caution! Children reared in such a home know well enough how to avoid treating, frequenting saloons, and convivial habits of every sort. Such parents not only obey the Apostle's injunction, "Be sober," but do the very best possible thing to induce those whom they love to obey it also.

But once more: what does a man do who takes the pledge? He offers something to God in atonement for the sin of drunkenness. And herein is the best use of the pledge. It combines all the other good purposes of it. It puts the top rail of double safety on the fence that keeps the beast out of the garden of the soul; it sets up the strongest inducement of good example; but more than all, it consecrates everything to God by uniting it to our Lord's thirst on the cross.

Brethren, why was it that, when our Lord suffered agony of soul, He complained in such words as would be apt to move the drunkard more than any other sinner: "O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "O my Father! if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, I will be done." Is there no special significance in His choice of those words? And listen to the account St. John gives of our Lord's physical agony: "Jesus, knowing that all things were accomplished that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, said, I thirst!" And they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore, had received the vinegar He said: It is finished! And He bowed His head and gave up the ghost." Thirst was the only bodily torment He complained of. Had He no special purpose in this?

So the man who takes the pledge suffers thirst in union with Christ and for love of God to atone for sins of drunkenness. That is why it does not settle the matter against taking the pledge when one can say he does not need it. Our Lord had no need to suffer thirst. He could say, I own all the cool fountains in the world, and all the strengthening wine of the world is Mine, and I might drink and never need to thirst for My own sake; but I love the poor drunkard, and for his sake I will do thirsting for a cool drink and tasting only bitter vinegar. And the Catholic total abstainer says: "O Lord! permit me to bear Thy company in Thy bitter thirst."

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LADY JANE.

CHAPTER XIX. MARDI GRAS.

One morning—it was the day before "Mardi-Gras"—when Lady Jane entered Pepsie's room, instead of finding her friend engaged in her usual occupation, the table was cleared of all that pertained to business, and on it was spread a quantity of pink canbric, which Pepsie was measuring and snipping with great gravity.

"Oh, Pepsie, what are you making?" cried Lady Jane, greatly surprised at this display of finery.

"It's a domino," replied Pepsie curtly, her mouth full of pins.

"A domino, a domino," repeated Lady Jane. "What's a domino? I never saw one."

"Of course, you never saw one, because you never saw a 'Mardi-gras,'" said Pepsie, removing the pins, and smiling to herself as she smoothed the pattern on the cloth.

"Mardi-gras! Is it for Mardi-gras?" asked Lady Jane eagerly. "You might tell me all about it. I don't know what it's for," she added, much puzzled, and somewhat annoyed at Pepsie's air of secrecy.

"Well, it's for some one to wear," Pepsie replied, still smiling serenely, and with an exasperating air of mystery.

"Oh, Pepsie—who, who is it for?" cried Lady Jane, pressing close, and putting both arms round her friend's neck; "tell me, please, do! It's a secret I won't tell."

"Oh, it's for a little girl I know," said Pepsie, cutting and slashing the canbric with the greatest indifference, and evidently bent on keeping her own counsel.

Lady Jane stood still for a moment, letting her arms fall from Pepsie's neck. Her face was downcast, and something like a tear shone on her lashes; then, a little slowly and thoughtfully, she climbed into her chair on the other side of the table, and, leaning on her elbows, watched the absorbed Pepsie silently.

Pepsie pinned and snipped and smoothed, all the while smiling with that little air of unconcern which so puzzled the child. Presently, without looking up, she said:

"Can't you guess, Lady, who it's for?"

"Is n't it for Sophie Paichoux?" ventured Lady Jane.

"No, no," said Pepsie, decidedly; "the one I mean it for is n't any relation to me."

"Then I don't know any other little girl," Oh, Pepsie, I can't guess."

Madame Jozain won't make her one. "Never mind saying anything to her about it. Here's two bits. Send Tite for some canbric, and I'll cut you a pattern in a minute. I've made so many I know all about it, and, my dear, you can sew it up through the day. Have her ready by nine o'clock. I'll be here by nine, I'm going to take them all up in the cart and turn them out, and they can come back to me when they're tired."

In this way Tante Modeste surmounted all difficulties, and the next morning Lady Jane, completely enveloped in a little pink domino, with a tiny pink mask carefully fastened over her rosy face, and her blue eyes lying through the two holes, was slipped into the milk cart with the brood of little Paichoux, and with many good-byes to poor forlorn Pepsie and to Tony, who was standing dejectedly on one leg, the happy child was rattled away in the bright sunlight, through the merry, noisy crowd, to that center of every delight, Canal street on Mardi-gras.

There was no room for Tite Souris in the cart, so that dusky maid, arrayed in the colors of a demon of darkness, an old, red domino with black, bat-like wings, was obliged to take herself to the rendezvous, near the Clay statue, by whatever means of locomotion she could command. When the cart was passing Rue Royale, there was Tite in her uncanny disguise, flapping her black wings, and scuttling along as fast as her thin legs would carry her.

At last the excited party in the milk cart and the model for a diabolical flying machine were together under Tante Modeste's severe scrutiny, listening with much divided attention to her final instructions.

"Tiburse, attend to what I tell you," she said impressively; "you are the eldest of the party, and you must take care of the little ones, especially of Lady Jane; what I say—don't let her go. And you, Tite, keep on the other side and hold her hand fast. Sophie, you can go in front with the two smallest, and the others can follow behind. Now keep together, and get along decently, no running or ricketing on the street, and as soon as the procession passes, you had better come back to me. You will be tired and ready to go home. And Tite, remember what Miss Pepsie told you about Miss Lady. If you let anything happen to her, you'd better go and drown yourself."

Tite, with her wings poised for flight, promised everything, even to drowning herself if necessary; and before Tante Modeste had climbed into her cart, the whole brood had disappeared amongst the motley crowd.

At first Lady Jane was a little frightened at the noise and confusion; but she had a brave little heart, and clung tightly to Tiburse on one side and Tite on the other. In a few moments she was quite reassured and as happy as any of the merry littleimps around her.

It was delightful; she seemed to be carried along in a stream of riotous life, all disguised and decorated to suit their individual fancies. There were demons and angels, clowns and monks, imps and fairies, animals and birds, fish and insects—in fact, everything that the richest imagination could devise.

At first Tite Souris ambled along quite decorously, making now and then a little essay at flying with her one free wing, which gave her a curious one-sided appearance, provoking much mirth among the little Paichoux; but at length restraint became irksome, and finally impossible. She could bear it no longer, even if she died for it. Ignoring all her promises, and the awful reckoning in store for her, with one bound for freedom she tore herself from Lady Jane's clinging hand, and flapping her hideous wings, plunged into the crowd, and was instantly swallowed up in the vortex of humanity that whirled everywhere.

The procession was coming, the crowd grew very dense, and they were pulled and pushed, and jostled; but still Tiburse, who was a strong, courageous boy, held his ground, and landed Lady Jane on a window sill, where she could have a good view. The other Paichoux, under the generalship of Sophie, came up to form a guard, and so, in a very secure and comfortable position, in spite of Tite's desertion Lady Jane saw the procession of King Rex, and his royal household.

When Tiburse told her of the beautiful Beuf gras, decorated so gaily with flowers and ribbons, would be killed and eaten afterward, she almost shed tears, and when he further informed her that King Rex was no king at all, only a citizen dressed as a king, in satin, and velvet, and feathers, she doubted it, and still clung to the illusion that he must sit always on a throne, and wear a crown, according to the traditions of Mr. Gex.

Now that the procession was over, all might have gone well if Tiburse had held out as he began; but, alas! in an evil moment, he yielded to temptation and fell.

They were on their way back to Tante Modeste, quite satisfied with all they had seen, when they came upon a crowd gathered around the door of a fashionable club. From the balcony above a party of young men, who were more generous than wise, were throwing small change, dimes and nickels, into the crowd; that the rabble might scramble for them; and there right in the midst of the seething mass was Tite Souris, her domino hanging in rags, her wings gone, and her whole appearance very dilapidated and disorderly; but the demon of greed was beaming in her eyes, and

her teeth were showing in a fierce, white line, while she plunged and struggled and battled for the roof of all evil.

Tiburse's first intention was to make a dozeur of the crowd; but just as he was about to do so the gleam of a dime on the edge of the sidewalk caught his eye, and, overcome by the spirit of adventure, he forgot everything, and dropped Lady Jane's hand to make a dive for it.

Lady Jane never knew how it happened, but in an instant she was whirled away from the Paichoux, swept on by the crowd that a policeman was driving before him, and carried she knew not where.

At first she ran hither and thither, seizing upon every domino that bore the least resemblance to her companions, and calling Tiburse, Sophie, Nanette, in heartrending tones, until quite exhausted she sank down in a doorway, and watched the crowd surge past her.

TO BE CONTINUED.

CHARITABLE BAZAAR.

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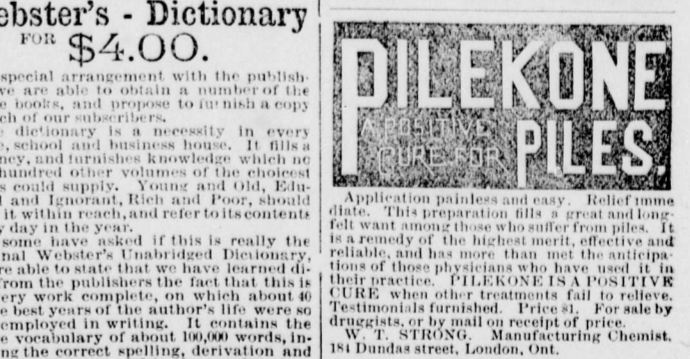
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